

PROPAGATING PERENNIALS

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Most perennials can be propagated by division, cuttings or seed. These techniques are good methods for increasing the number of plants in the garden or for sharing perennials with friends. Plants raised by division or cuttings (vegetative or asexual propagation) will be replicas of the parent plant. Some plants raised from seed will not be true to the parent type because of the genetic variability in sexual propagation.

DIVISION

Division is generally the simplest method for most gardeners. Many perennials form large clumps as they age, and occasionally the center dies out. Division not only creates new plants, but also rejuvenates old clumps and controls their size.

The best time to divide established plants is in early spring when they are about 3 inches tall, or in the fall as the foliage starts to die down. A rule of thumb is to divide spring and summer blooming plants in late summer or fall, and to divide fall-bloomers in early spring. Although not always applicable, this allows the plants the longest reestablishment time before they bloom again.

The procedure is simple: dig the entire clump out of the ground, pull it apart, and replant the new sections in soil enriched with organic matter and a small amount of fertilizer high in phosphorus and potassium. This may be easier said than done when the old clump has formed a seemingly impenetrable mass, but two spading forks back-to-back can be used to pry the clump apart.

When dividing perennials in full leaf in summer or fall, it is sometimes necessary to cut the leaves in half to make the crown easier to see and to help cut water loss as they establish themselves in their new location. Hosta and iris are two that benefit from this.

CUTTINGS

Cuttings are sections of plants used to create whole new ones. They may be basal cuttings (small divisions or shoots without roots removed from the base of the plant), stem cuttings (a section with both terminal and side buds), a tip cutting (stem cutting taken from the end of a shoot), a heel cutting (side shoot with a piece of the main stem attached), or a root cutting (a section of a root).

Generally a coarse sand and moistened peat moss mix or a perlite and moistened peat moss mix is a good rooting medium. Many plants also need warmth (65°F to 75°F) to root properly, but some root at lower temperatures.

SEED

Seeding is a good method for creating a lot of plants at a time and for propagating plants that do not divide well. Seeds of many hardy perennials can be sown in the fall because they benefit from the freezing and thawing that will heave them into the soil. They may need cold temperatures to break seed dormancy. Purchased seed can usually be sown from February to April to take advantage of the alternating temperature swings.

Some seed can be sown indoors in an area with bright light to be planted out when the weather warms. It is important that the potting mix and the containers are sterile to help prevent damping off, a fungus disease that causes seedlings to rot at the soil level. Commercial soil-less potting mix is sterile. Pots can be sterilized by washing them in soap and water, then soaking briefly in a mixture of one part chlorine bleach and nine parts of water. Seedlings raised indoors will have to be hardened off by gradually exposing them to outdoor conditions before planting them in their permanent place in the garden. The best hardening-off tactics are to stop fertilizing, reduce water, and place the plants outdoors in a shady location for about a week while they adjust to being outdoors.

<i>Achillea spp.</i>	yarrow	Divide spring or fall. Seed in late winter. Tip cuttings in spring or early summer
<i>Aconitum spp.</i>	monkshood	Divide fall or early spring
<i>Aegopodium spp.</i>	goutweed	Divide spring or fall. Self-sows.
<i>Anaphalis spp.</i>	pearly ever-lasting	Divide early spring or late fall. Tip cuttings early summer. Seed in late summer.
<i>Anemone spp.</i>	anemone	Spring flowering: divide after flowering or when dormant. Summer flowering: divide spring or after flowering.
<i>Anthemis spp.</i>	marguerite	Divide spring or fall. Take root cuttings in dormancy.
<i>Aquilegia spp.</i>	columbine	Divide spring. Seed outdoors in fall. Self-sows.
<i>Armeria spp.</i>	sea pink, thrift	Divide spring or fall. Seed indoors in winter.
<i>Artemisia spp.</i>	wormwood, artemesia	Divide spring or fall. Take cuttings in winter.
<i>Aruncus spp.</i>	goatsbeard	Divide in spring. Sow fresh seed outdoors in summer.
<i>Asclepias spp.</i>	butterflyweed	Tip cuttings late spring. Sow fresh seed outdoors in fall. Self-sows. Do not divide.
<i>Aster spp.</i>	Michaelmas daisy	Divide in spring. Take stem cuttings late spring/early summer. Sow fresh seed in fall.
<i>Astilbe spp.</i>	astilbe, false spirea	Divide spring or fall every third year.
<i>Aurinia spp.</i>	basket-of-gold	Doesn't divide easily. Cuttings root easily.
<i>Baptisia spp.</i>	false indigo, baptisia	Divide fall. Sow fresh seed out in summer.
<i>Bergenia spp.</i>	bergenia	Divide in spring by cutting the rhizome-like stem. Sow fresh seed outside in summer.
<i>Brunnera spp.</i>	bugloss, brunnera	Divide early spring or fall. Take root cuttings fall or winter. May self-sow.
<i>Caltha spp.</i>	marsh marigolds	Divide in summer. Sow fresh seed outdoors-late spring.
<i>Campanula spp.</i>	bellflowers	Divide early spring or fall. Tip cuttings early summer. Species-type grown from seed.
<i>Catananche spp.</i>	cupid's dart	Root cuttings fall or winter. Seed indoors late winter. Can divide annually.
<i>Centaurea spp.</i>	mountain bluet, cornflower	Divide spring or fall. Seed outdoors in fall.
<i>Centranthus spp.</i>	Jupiter's beard, valerian	Seed in late winter. Self sows. May take basal cuttings.
<i>Chelone spp.</i>	turtlehead	Divide in spring/late fall. Stem cuttings early summer
<i>Chrysanthemum spp.</i>	chrysanthemums	Divide annually in spring. Tip cuttings late spring
<i>Cimicifuga spp.</i>	bugbane	Divide tough roots in fall infrequently. Seed in fall
<i>Coreopsis spp.</i>	coreopsis	Divide spring or fall frequently. Sow fresh seed indoors summer or fall
<i>Delphinium spp.</i>	delphinium	Divide in spring. Sow fresh seed outdoors summer or fall. Stem cuttings early spring
<i>Dianthus spp.</i>	pinks	Divide spring or fall. Stem cuttings in summer. Seed in spring.
<i>Dicentra spp.</i>	bleeding heart	Divide fall. Sow fresh seed in summer. Root cuttings in fall
<i>Digitalis spp.</i>	foxglove	Seed indoors late winter; outdoors in summer.
<i>Doronicum spp.</i>	leopard's bane	Divide after flowering.
<i>Echinacea spp.</i>	purple coneflower	Root cuttings in fall. Seed outdoors in fall or indoors in winter.
<i>Echinops spp.</i>	globe thistle	Divide in fall. Root cuttings in spring or fall. Seed indoors late winter.
<i>Epimedium spp.</i>	bishop's hat	Divide after flowering or in late summer.

<i>Erigeron spp.</i>	fleabane	Divide in fall. Tip cuttings early summer. Seed indoors in winter.
<i>Eupatorium spp.</i>	mistflower	Divide spring or fall. Tip cuttings early summer.
<i>Euphorbia spp.</i>	cushion spurge	Divide in fall. Tip cuttings in summer.
<i>Filipendula spp.</i>	dropwort	Divide clumps in fall.
<i>Gaillardia spp.</i>	blanketflower	Divide early spring. Seeds outdoors in fall.
<i>Galium spp.</i>	sweet woodruff	Divide spring or fall. Stem cuttings early summer.
<i>Geranium spp.</i>	cranesbill	Divide in early spring or fall. Seed outdoors in summer.
<i>Geum spp.</i>	avens	Divide spring or fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors in summer or fall.
<i>Gypsophila spp.</i>	baby's breath	Cuttings in spring. Sow seed outdoors spring or fall.
<i>Helleborus spp.</i>	Christmas rose	Fresh seed outdoors in spring or summer.
<i>Hemerocallis spp.</i>	day lily	Divide in late summer or spring.
<i>Heuchera spp.</i>	coral bells	Divide in early spring or fall.
<i>Hibiscus spp.</i>	rose mallow	Tip cuttings in July. Seed outdoors in fall.
<i>Hosta spp.</i>	plantain lily	Divide in spring or fall.
<i>Iberis spp.</i>	evergreen candytuft	Tip cuttings early summer. Sow seed outdoors in spring or fall.
<i>Iris spp.</i>	irises	Divide after flowering in summer or early fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors summer or fall.
<i>Kniphofia spp.</i>	red hot poker	Divide by removing crowns from the edge of the clump in fall. Seed indoors in winter.
<i>Lamiastrum spp.</i>	yellow archangel	Divide spring or fall, tip cuttings spring or summer.
<i>Lavandula spp.</i>	true lavender	Divide spring. Tip cuttings from new growth in fall.
<i>Liatris spp.</i>	gayfeather	Divide corms early fall or spring. Seed outdoors fall.
<i>Limonium spp.</i>	sea lavender	Seed outdoors in fall.
<i>Liriope spp.</i>	lily turf	Divide clumps spring or fall.
<i>Lupinus spp.</i>	lupine	Remove sideshoots in fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors in late summer or indoors in winter (soak overnight).
<i>Lychnis spp.</i>	campion	Divide in spring. Plants self-sow.
<i>Lythrum spp.</i>	purple loosestrife	Divide spring or fall.
<i>Mertensia spp.</i>	bluebells	Divide after flowering. Plants self-sow.
<i>Monarda spp.</i>	bee balm	Divide early spring or fall.
<i>Nepeta spp.</i>	catmint	Divide spring or fall. Tip cuttings early summer.
<i>Oenothera spp.</i>	sundrops	Divide early spring or after flowering.
<i>Paeonia spp.</i>	peony	Divide late summer.
<i>Papaver nudicaule</i>	Iceland poppy	Plants self-sow.
<i>Papaver orientale</i>	Oriental poppy	Divide in late summer. Take root cuttings in late summer or fall.
<i>Penstemon spp.</i>	penstemon	Divide in early spring or after flowering. Seed outdoors in fall.
<i>Phlox spp.</i>	phlox	Divide woodland species after flowering, mounding species in fall, border species in spring. Stem cuttings spring or early summer. Take root cuttings in fall.
<i>Physostegia spp.</i>	obedient plant	Divide spring or late fall.
<i>Platycodon spp.</i>	balloon flower	Divide spring or early fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors-late summer or fall.
<i>Polemonium spp.</i>	Jacob's ladder	Sow fresh seed outdoors in fall. Divide after flowering or in fall.
<i>Primula spp.</i>	primrose	Divide after flowering. Sow fresh seed outdoors fall or indoors early spring.
<i>Pulmonaria spp.</i>	lungwort	Divide after flowering in fall.
<i>Ranunculus spp.</i>	buttercups	Divide after flowering or in fall. Plants self-sow.
<i>Rudbeckia spp.</i>	black-eyed Susan	Divide spring. Sow seed indoors winter or outdoors spring or fall.

<i>Salvia spp.</i>	sage	Divide spring or fall. Tip cuttings early summer.
<i>Santolina spp.</i>	lavender cotton	Cuttings anytime during growing season.
<i>Sedum spp.</i>	stonecrop, sedum	Divide spring or fall. Tip cuttings summer.
<i>Solidago spp.</i>	goldenrod	Divide in spring or after flowering. Self-sows.
<i>Stachys spp.</i>	lamb's ears	Divide in fall.
<i>Stokesia spp.</i>	Stoke's aster	Divide spring or fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors in fall or indoors in winter.
<i>Tiarella spp.</i>	foamflower	Divide spring or fall. Remove runners anytime during growing season. Seed outdoors in spring.
<i>Tradescantia spp.</i>	spiderwort	Divide plants mid to late fall. Self-sows.
<i>Tricyrtis spp.</i>	toad lilies	Divide in spring. Self-sows.
<i>Trollius spp.</i>	globeflower	Divide early spring or fall. Sow fresh seed outdoors in summer.
<i>Veronica spp.</i>	speedwell	Divide spring or fall. Stem cuttings early to mid-summer.
<i>Viola spp.</i>	violets	Divide spring or fall. Self-sows.
<i>Yucca spp.</i>	yuccas	Divide offsets in spring or fall.